

A visit to a National Nature Reserve with an ethnically mixed mother and child group

Reaching out to isolated young ethnic mothers and introducing a range of environmental activities

The BARAKAH mother and child group grew from a few young ethnic mothers with young children coming together to meet one morning a week in Swansea. The group has members from Arabic, Bangladeshi and Pakistani, Chinese and British backgrounds. They shared a feeling of being isolated at home since they had their young children and have no extended family to help out. Meeting together was their only opportunity to socialise away from home and they usually brought food to eat while they talked.



Making it happen

When the Black Environment Network (BEN) Development

Worker met up with them they discussed what else they might like to do as a group. They were interested in ways to safely explore the outdoors near to the city, where the children could enjoy some open space, and the mothers could also benefit from being in the fresh air. With this in mind, and working closely with partners CCW and Sustainable Swansea, BEN suggested some nearby sites to visit and arranged talks on environmental issues to connect up with the planned trips. Even the prospect of going out in the winter did not dampen their enthusiasm.

Surprises on the doorstep

A highlight of the programme of activities was a trip to Crymlyn Bog, a CCW National Nature Reserve near to Swansea. It is a fascinating and unexpected place to find within a stone's throw of the industrial area of the city, and all the women were amazed to learn how close the reserve was to their homes.

Even in December, there was plenty to see and learn about on the site, thanks to a guided walk from the reserve Warden, that BEN had arranged, and the visitors stayed dry in the Wellington boots they had been able to borrow.

In the Education Centre, everyone was

happily involved together colouring CCW pictures that reminded them of what they had seen outside. Refreshments were shared and the children especially enjoyed the game of putting their hands inside boxes and trying





to describe what they could feel. At the Centre, the BEN Development Worker was able to talk about other NNRs that they can visit. For the BARAKAH Group this was a very interesting new experience and they are keen to repeat it at another time of year.

The Crymlyn bog warden donated a tree and copies of the CCW colouring materials. These led to the recycle art and bag workshop to follow on. All mothers shared cars to the venue, so awareness of sustainable transport was raised.



The Future

This visit has inspired the group to plan a two months schedule of environmental activities and outings with their members, developed with BEN and partners in Sustainable Swansea. The activities include a bike ride to a Swansea park, an organic cooking day, a walk ending with feeding the ducks and a recycle art workshop.

FACTFILE

- **Funder:**
CCW
- **Partners:**
CCW
BARAKAH ethnic mother and child group, Swansea
Sustainable Swansea
- **Target:**
Mothers and children from a range of ethnicities
- **Numbers:**
10 women and children
- **Key Points:**
 - Introducing these activities into this group has helped the women learn about each other as well as the environment. They are now more confident to make plans for BARAKAH
 - Coming together through environmental activities addresses social isolation and learning potential



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